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Adding insult to injury

Schoharie pipeline will do as
much damage as hydrofracking



SHAWN BANNER/FOR THE SUNDAY GAZETTE

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So let me get this straight.

If you destroy vast swaths of farmland, pollute trillions of gallons of public aquifer, bulldoze trees and streambeds, cause earthquakes and kill wild and domestic animals (and humans), but you promise to bring jobs (no accurate number given), pay taxes (ignore the waivers and deals) and make landowners rich (but they can't live there any more), you are a national hero, savior of our energy security and probably "Businessman of the Year."

If, however, you have the audacity to speak out about the insanity of laying waste some of the best farmland in America, once called the Breadbasket of the Revolution, for heaven's sake, and destroying its air and water for all time, you are an enemy of the people and, worse, a liberal socialist.

Now I've got it.

ANOTHER HEADACHE

So now, not content with skewing reality and turning whole communities upside down with hydrofracking controversies, this industry wants to build a tube bigger around than a steel-belted radial to be buried (or sometimes above-ground where farmers have to work around it) in this very fragile karst-based farmland, so that the fossil fuel that is changing our climate can more quickly be transported to distribution centers and refineries to further heat the skies, make carbon dioxide and other poisons, and be liquefied to sell overseas to make even more money for the energy companies whose bottom line is already so obscenely bloated that their CEOs make more annually than the total wealth of some nations.

I see. Thank you for clearing that up.

Did no one ask why the Keystone XL Pipeline had to go to Houston, Texas? Is that the only refinery in America? Or is it because it's handy to the tankers that will take the fuel to foreign buyers for lots more profits than here in the United States of America?

NASA climatologist James Hansen has warned that if tar sands extraction continues, it is "essentially game over" for the climate, never mind all the other dangers.

EMPTY PROMISES

Has no one noticed that the promises of jobs and leases and safety for the pipeline in Schoharie County are similar to the promises for every other pipeline these companies have built?

In Pennsylvania's Endless Mountains, the Inergy company assured property owners it would make sparing use of eminent domain and negotiate with them. Then, as soon as the approval was given, condemnation proceedings began against nearly half the landowners. In fact, Inergy had prepared these condemnations even before the approval was given.

"This land is our land, not your land, and it's made for us, not you, so just shut up." Woody Guthrie is rolling in his grave.

In Schoharie County, a 30-mile section of a 120-mile pipeline (costing \$750 million and affecting about 1,000 landowners) will transport 650,000 dekatherms of natural gas daily to growing markets in the Northeast. It will use blasting to remove bedrock, horizontal drilling to put pipe under Schoharie and Fox creeks, go under 13 wetlands, cross 13 bodies of water, 11 roadways and one railroad.

The project will require more than 100 acres of land during construction and about half that after, including clear-cutting 100-foot permanent

pipeline easements with no minimum residential setbacks, plus a new compressor station (that leaks methane), 32,000 horsepower turbines, two above-ground storage tanks, three stacks and an emergency generator. Think about the sound and light show that represents 24/7. These, and the complex of other buildings required, will be remote-controlled from Houston. Who gets to make that phone call: "Houston, we have a problem?"

They say "We've done this for decades. It's perfectly safe. We know what we're doing." But if we ask for their proof, their science, we're told "the numbers aren't in. Some incidents [read 'accidents'] are unavoidable. Stuff happens. Not to worry."

BURDEN OF PROOF

And when (not if) the spills happen, it is up to us, the frackees and pipeline lessees to prove that it was the fault of the energy giants and not a pre-existing condition. Have we heard that before? Do all these frackers have the same script writers? Maybe we should listen to Vermont Gov. Peter Shumlin, who declined the privilege of making his citizens the lab rats in this particular environmental science experiment when he signed Vermont's law banning fracking outright.

Sometimes both opposing sides do not deserve serious equal consideration. Sometimes one side is just wrong. Sometimes we just need to say "no!" and "get the frack out of our state."

This may be one of these times.

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